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A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT VIEW OF THE OPTIMAL NAVAL POSTURE.(U)  
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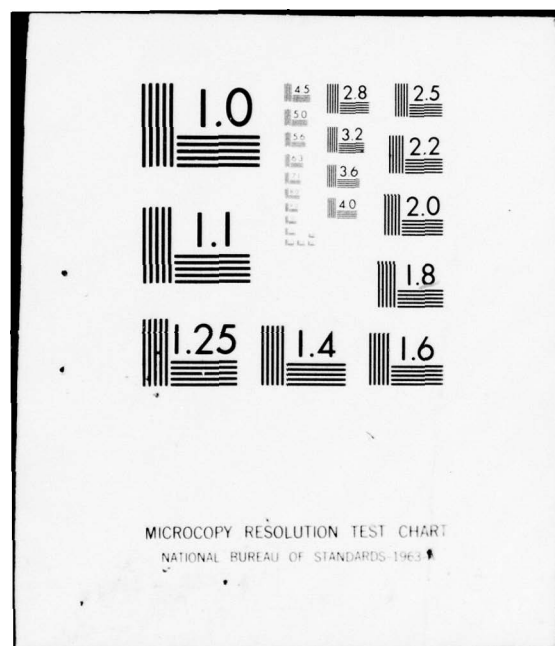
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Robert G. Weinland

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June 1978

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Robert G. Weinland

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This paper was written in 1976, while the author was a member of the defense analysis staff of the Brookings Institution. It was prepared for delivery at the 1976 Convention of the American Political Science Association (APSA/IUS Panel on "Changing Strategic Requirements and Military Posture"), The Palmer House, Chicago, Ill., September 2, 1976. The opinions it expresses are solely those of its author.

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BY _____		
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001 INTRODUCTION

002       This is a deliberate attempt to survey a familiar problem from  
003 an unfamiliar perspective -- not for the sake of novelty, but because  
004 this perspective shows that there is more than one set of steps that  
005 can be taken to improve the situation. The problem under considera-  
006 tion is the optimal U.S. naval general purpose force posture.

008       The perspective from which such questions are usually addressed  
009 is that of relative capabilities: In view of what the opposition has,  
010 which are the best weapons and support systems for us, and how many  
011 of each should we have? How much is enough?

011       That perspective is too narrow. Its adoption more or less guar-  
012 antees that the discussion will not only take a particular course  
013 but reach a particular end, without in the process providing a satis-  
014 factory examination of the problem, let alone a satisfactory solu-  
015 tion. This is because the second half of the "how much is enough?"  
016 question -- "enough to do what?" -- is rarely given the attention  
017 it deserves.

018       Consideration of the numbers, characteristics and capabilities  
019 of opposing forces is necessary for designing an optimal posture,  
020 but it is far from sufficient. A posture consists of more than just  
021 a force structure. It also includes the policies and practices that  
022 inform the use of those forces, and in many respects how things are  
023 used is just as important as what they are -- more so when they are  
024 not used as effectively as they might be.

025        This discussion consequently focuses on how our naval forces  
026 are employed rather than how they are constituted. It does so in  
027 part simply to redress the imbalance that prevails in such examina-  
028 tions. Primarily, however, it focuses on their use in order to make  
029 two points: There is a great deal of leverage to be gained in the  
030 international arena from restructuring U.S. naval operations, and  
031 it can be done today.

035        The paper has four immediate objectives. The first is to ex-  
036 amine the costs of concentrating too closely on the capabilities of  
037 forces and not closely enough on their intended and actual uses.  
038 The second objective is to describe some of the more important as-  
039 pects of current U.S. naval operations. The third is to identify  
040 the changes taking place in the requirements for the Navy's employ-  
041 ment. The fourth is to outline modifications in its operations that  
042 would put it in a better position to meet those requirements.

#### 044 BEYOND CAPABILITIES

045        Estimating the present and likely future U.S.-Soviet naval  
046 balance and outlining alternative naval force structures to cope  
047 with Soviet capabilities are activities being accorded increasing  
048 attention in the Administration, the Congress, the press and aca-  
049 deme. In part, this activity merely reflects the fact that 1976  
050 is an election year -- but only in part. It is also a reflection  
051 of more long-term processes. The United States -- both its offici-  
052 aldome and a significant portion of its citizenry -- has for some

053 time been engaged in a reassessment of its role in the international  
054 arena and its requirements for naval and other armed forces to im-  
055 plement that role. And part of the background for this is the ob-  
056 vious fact that the overall U.S.-Soviet balance of power is changing.  
057 The United States has lost not only the clearcut strategic nuclear  
058 superiority it once enjoyed, but the equally clearcut superiority  
059 that it once had on the high seas. To a certain extent, these lat-  
060 ter changes are the result of conscious U.S. choice (electing to di-  
061 vert resources away from the military sector), but for the most part  
062 they are the consequences of Soviet actions. Whether these trends  
063 will continue, or be reversed, remains an open question.

065       Many of those exercises in assessing the balance and identify-  
066 ing ways to redress it have produced valuable information and in-  
067 sights. We have acquired a better idea of the aggregate capabili-  
068 ties of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact allies. We also have  
069 acquired a much better idea of the real burden they must bear in  
070 order to possess those capabilities. We even have some idea of the  
071 comparative magnitude of their and our own efforts. Some of this  
072 knowledge is very useful. Much of it, however, is not.

073       One reason why its utility is questionable is that its validity  
074 is questionable. Calculating the relative capabilities of not only  
075 present but future U.S. and Soviet forces is a task of enormous com-  
076 plexity. None of its component operations is straightforward, let  
077 alone easy. And their integration is even more difficult, especially



078 their integration into a balance that compares opposing but often  
079 markedly different forces\* with some semblance of validity. It may  
080 even be impossible. Most of the criticism of the calculations and  
081 plans that have been produced thus far has focused on this question --  
082 and rightly so.

083       However, even if the results of such calculations were, in  
084 fact, known to be valid, that would not automatically make them  
085 useful. There are numerous reasons why this is so. Let us focus  
086 on two.

087       First, calculations of the overall capability balance can tell  
088 us what will happen only in a restricted set of situations -- none  
089 of which is likely to arise in the foreseeable future. These are  
090 situations in which all of the forces included in the balance are  
091 employed -- i.e., to the extent that such calculations predict  
092 outcomes, they predict the outcomes only of all-out exchanges,  
093 fought to exhaustion. They do not tell us what will occur in limi-  
094 ted exchanges, involving only a portion of the forces included in  
095 the balance.

096

097       \*  
\_\_\_\_\_

098 Submarines and antisubmarine warfare aircraft, for instance.

099           It would be folly to argue -- and even greater folly to be  
100 convinced by the argument -- that the potentiality of total war need  
101 not be a matter of great concern. It should. It is the "worst case";  
102 and we should continue to do all we can to deter its outbreak, and  
103 all it is reasonable to do to cope with it should it occur. But  
104 does anyone who approaches the problem with a sense of realism actu-  
105 ally think that the Soviets are about to launch a strategic strike  
106 against the United States or an offensive across the demarcation line  
107 in Central Europe, and thus directly unleash World War III -- or that  
108 they would without adequate provocation take any action that might  
109 degenerate to the point where World War III was a likely outcome?  
110 The answer has to be "no".

111           On the other hand, it takes neither great perspicacity nor  
112 detachment from reality to foresee the occurrence of limited U.S.-  
113 Soviet exchanges, especially in peripheral though still important  
114 areas -- the Persian Gulf for instance. Even assuming that limited  
115 exchanges can stay limited, the potential threats they contain to  
116 at least significant -- and sometimes even vital -- U.S. interests,  
117 coupled with their greater likelihood of occurrence, should give  
118 them essential equivalence with the "worst case" as matters of  
119 concern and stimuli to preventive action.

120           But calculations of the overall balance of power provide us  
121 with precisely as much useful information on the conditions under  
122 which limited conflicts are likely to begin as they provide us on  
123 the imminence of someone's initiating unlimited conflict, and that

124 is nothing at all. This is the second reason why such calculations  
125 aren't very useful.

126       The reason those calculations cannot provide predictive infor-  
127 mation on the outbreak of conflict is the same as the reason they  
128 cannot provide useful information on the processes and outcomes of  
129 less than all-out exchanges. That is because the mere existence of  
130 capabilities reveals nothing about the conditions under which they  
131 will or will not be used, and should they be used, precious little  
132 about how. In order to learn anything useful about these subjects  
133 they must be addressed directly. That means assessments of capa-  
134 bilities must be supplemented with assessments of intentions.

135       This is the point where, if it has not already occurred, tra-  
136 ditional military thought parts company with this line of argument.  
137 "Intentions are readily changed; capabilities are not" it holds; and  
138 that is true -- but trivial. Granted, the intention to attack can  
139 be revised in a trice and (making only minimal assumptions about  
140 the possession of reliable and effective command, control and commu-  
141 nications systems) no attack will take place. But doing the opposite  
142 is a different matter entirely.

143       Consider the case of Israel between May and October of 1973.  
144 It had full knowledge of the balance prevailing between its forces  
145 and the forces of the Arab "confrontation" states, but that infor-  
146 mation couldn't and didn't tell it that an attack was imminent. It  
147 also had extensive, if not full, knowledge of the disposition and  
148 state of readiness of the Arab forces, but that information didn't

149 tell it that an attack was imminent either. The reason why that  
150 knowledge wasn't helpful was that the Arabs had long before acquired  
151 the capability, deployed the forces and established their readiness  
152 to attack -- actually, they had done it by April of 1973. After-  
153 wards, they sat where they were more or less ready to go for four  
154 and a half months -- and then they attacked.\* The Israelis had  
155 paid careful attention to the overall balance of power. On the  
156 basis of their calculations of the balance they had concluded that  
157 since the Arabs could not prevail in an all-out exchange they would  
158 not attack. Although aware of last minute modifications in Arab  
159 deployments and readiness, the Israelis assumed their opponents were  
160 deterred, and did not respond to those changes.

161         The Arabs, however, who had made the same calculations but  
162 did not intend an all-out exchange, attacked anyway. Their objec-  
163 tives were limited, and could be accomplished in a limited conflict.

164         Had the Israelis supplemented their explicit assessments of  
165 Arab capabilities with explicit assessments of Arab intentions --  
166 and in the process considered not only the "worst case" but "less-  
167 than-worst-but-more-likely cases" -- events might have taken a  
168 different course. However, they didn't.

169 \_\_\_\_\_  
170 \*  
171 This is an over-simplification (some forces had been in place since  
172 1970, others moved into their attack positions at the last minute).  
173 It does not distort the underlying point, though, which is that  
174 based upon possession, disposition and readiness of forces the  
175 Arabs had been prepared for the attack for quite some time.



176 Reliance on "worst case" analysis of capabilities as a guide  
177 to an opponent's future actions thus failed the Israelis in October  
178 1973. Reliance on the same approach for planning its own actions  
179 failed the U.S. in a different way in the same situation.

180 For the better part of the more than two decades that the U.S.  
181 Sixth Fleet has been located in the Mediterranean, it has served as  
182 an important component of the U.S. nuclear strike force. Its carrier-  
183 based attack aircraft and nuclear weapons were for many years a part  
184 of the strategic deterrent posed by the United States to the Soviet  
185 Union. They were also part of the theater war-fighting forces main-  
186 tained in place by NATO should that deterrent prove inadequate. Both  
187 of these roles posed specific force availability and readiness re-  
188 quirements for Sixth Fleet, which eventually led to a U.S. commit-  
189 ment to maintain two carrier task groups in the Mediterranean at all  
190 times.

191 In the course of time, the Sixth Fleet's strategic deterrent  
192 responsibilities were transferred to land-based bomber and missile  
193 forces; and Middle Eastern contingencies replaced direct NATO-Warsaw  
194 Pact conflicts as the "most likely cases" in which the Sixth Fleet  
195 would be employed. However, retention of the capabilities required  
196 for the 'worst case' -- full scale NATO-Warsaw Pact War -- remained  
197 the predominant goal of U.S. planners, and that meant that the two  
198 carrier commitment was retained.

199 This situation was a direct antecedent of the character of the

200 alert declared by the United States near the conclusion of the Octo-  
201 ber War. That alert extended well beyond the European-Mediterranean-  
202 Middle Eastern theater, and it involved nuclear as well as conven-  
203 tional forces. It was widely characterized as a strategic alert.  
204 All viewed it as a strong move. To some, it appeared to be a stronger  
205 move than the situation warranted.

206       It was undertaken the way it was, however, for its shock value --  
207 to insure that the Soviets "got the message." Had the circumstances  
208 been different -- in particular, had the United States not been  
208 locked into the pattern of a continuous two carrier presence in the  
209 Mediterranean -- it might have been possible to transmit an action  
210 language message of equal shock value without resorting to an inher-  
211 ently dangerous strategic alert. As the discussion later on makes  
212 clear, one potentially viable alternative\* would have been to under-  
213 take a significant reinforcement of the Sixth Fleet -- say, doubling  
214 its combatant strength. However, the practice of keeping two carrier  
215 task groups deployed to the Mediterranean made that a near impossi-  
216 bility. There were two reasons why this was so. First, given the  
217 size of the force already deployed to the Mediterranean any such  
218 reinforcement necessarily would have had to be just as large, or  
219 larger, to have the desired impact. But, second, given the declin-  
220 ing strength of the U.S. Navy, maintaining a large force continuous-  
221 ly deployed forward had used up resources that otherwise might have  
222 permitted reinforcement of the Sixth Fleet by a force of equivalent  
222 or greater size.

223

224 \*

225 Assuming the proper actions would have been accompanied by the  
226 proper words in the proper ears.

227           The U.S. had moulded its posture to meet one set of require-  
228 ments, and in so doing precluded its meeting a different set. The  
229 "more likely" case had occurred, and a posture tailored to maximize  
230 the effectiveness of the force in the "worst case" had proved in-  
231 capable of meeting a clearly lesser challenge.

232 USES

233           One of the major points of the foregoing section is that con-  
234 centrating on preparation for the "worst case" does not necessarily  
235 give one the ability to act effectively in a "less-than-worst-case" --  
236 either intellectually (the Israelis' surprise) or operationally (the  
237 U.S. alert). Lesser cases are not necessarily miniature editions  
238 of the "worst case"; and the requirements of the one may well be  
239 incompatible with those of the other.

240           The four following sections address the principal aspects of  
241 this problem in terms of the likely contribution of our present and  
242 future naval posture to the success of our foreign policy in one  
243 particular region: the Middle East. This and the next section --  
244 on the inflexibility in the way we deploy our forces, and the chang-  
245 ing requirements for their employment -- focus on the origins of  
246 the problem. The last two focus on recommendations for its solution.

247           It is difficult to obtain a precise picture of the manner in  
248 which naval forces are actually used. Users are generally reluctant  
249 to discuss the subject, and except in unusual circumstances opera-  
250 tions rarely lend themselves to succinct description. Simple mea-  
001 sures, while undoubtedly distorting reality somewhat, nevertheless

002 can be quite revealing. For example, it is not at all difficult to  
003 see that deployments to the Mediterranean have become rigid, that  
004 Sixth Fleet strength is now more or less insulated from and for the  
005 most part independent of the prevailing operational environment there.  
006 Nor is it difficult to see how efforts to meet employment "norms"  
007 established to serve internal Navy objectives enhance that isolation.  
008 Much the same situation prevails with U.S. naval deployments to the  
009 Indian Ocean. In effect, as will be argued later, this has created  
010 a situation in which, on both the northern and southern flanks of  
011 the Middle East, the United States goes to great expense to deploy  
012 forces that do not impact events in the region as effectively as  
013 they might. Were the presence of these forces in the region more  
014 closely related to those events, that impact could be substantial.

015       The absence of a close relationship between deployments to  
016 the Mediterranean and the character of the operational environment  
017 there is neither a new nor a transitory phenomenon and, as will be  
018 seen below, it has both short-term and long-term aspects. Table 1,  
019 which presents the composition of the surface component of the U.S.  
020 Sixth Fleet each January 1 between 1971 and 1976, provides a con-  
021 crete illustration of the relative inflexibility of these deployments.

022       In the six years covered, only five changes that could be called  
023 significant occurred in the indicated composition of the Sixth Fleet\* --

045

046 \*

047       Since these data do not show the Fleet's submarine component, there  
048 is no guarantee that all significant modifications in Fleet composi-  
049 tion are represented here.



TABLE 1: SIXTH FLEET SURFACE COMBATANTS  
AND AUXILIARIES, AS OF 1 JANUARY 1971-1975\*

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Aircraft Carriers <sup>1</sup>	2	2	2	2	2	2
Cruisers <sup>2</sup>	2	2	2	2	1	1-3
Destroyers <sup>3</sup>	18	17	17	14	15	15-13
Patrol Boats <sup>4</sup>	2	2	4	4	4	4
Amphibious Lift Ships (including Helicopter Carriers) <sup>5</sup>	4	4	5	5	7	5
Auxiliaries	<u>6</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>9</u>
Total	34	35	37	38	39	36

<sup>1</sup>CVA, CVS, CV, CVN

<sup>2</sup>CG, CLG

<sup>3</sup>DLG, DDG, DD, DEG, DE, FF, FFG

<sup>4</sup>PG

<sup>5</sup>LKA, LPA, LPD, LPH, LSD, LST

\*Data provided by U.S. Navy

024 and one of those was the result of a change in definitions.\* The  
025 only changes that were both significant and real occurred in the  
026 destroyer, amphibious and auxiliary forces. The auxiliary force grew  
027 by an average of three units between the first and second halves of  
028 the period covered. The amphibious force was increased by one ship,  
029 but that was a helicopter carrier which substantially increased the  
030 Fleet's capacity to project power ashore. The destroyer force, on  
031 the other hand, declined by an average of three units between the two  
032 halves of the period. In addition, there was a real but militarily  
033 insignificant increase in the number of patrol boats operating with  
034 the Fleet. Overall fleet size increased by an average of only two  
035 units (6%) between the beginning and the end of the period.

037       These rather modest changes in the size and composition of the  
038 Sixth Fleet occurred during a period characterized by anything but  
039 modest change in the military-political environment in the Mediter-  
040 ranean. The two most important changes in that environment occurred  
041 in the Soviet Mediterranean Squadron -- which in the early 1970s ex-  
042 perience significant growth in both combat capability and staying  
043 power -- and in the political climate along the Mediterranean littor-  
044 al -- which on the whole became decidedly less supportive of a U.S.  
044 naval presence in the region.

050

051 \*

051 The criteria for differentiating between U.S. cruisers and destroy-  
052 ers were revised in 1975, resulting in some of the latter being up-  
053 graded to the status of the former.

054           Two of the changes in the size and composition of the Sixth  
055 Fleet made during this period -- the addition of a helicopter carrier  
056 and patrol gunboats -- were the result of events occurring in the  
057 Mediterranean\* The antecedents of the other three lay wholly with-  
058 in the U.S. Navy: block obsolescence of ships constructed during  
059 during World War II, reductions in the strength of the operating  
060 forces to make funds available for new construction, and efforts  
061 to compensate for those reductions by making forward deployments  
062 more regular (and in some cases more permanent).

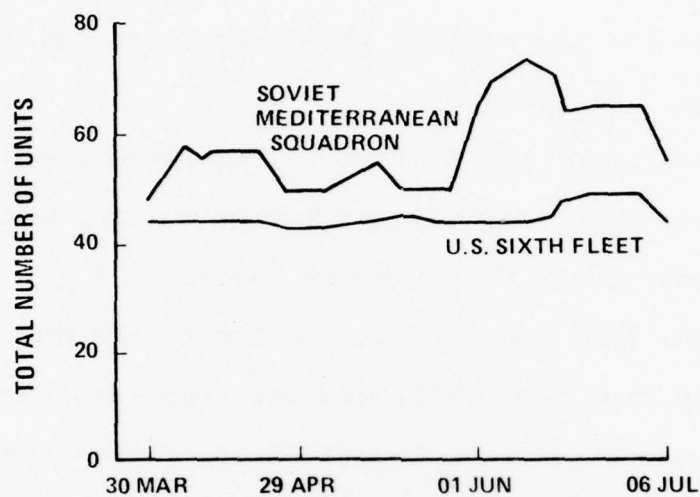
063           Figure 1, which compares the respective total strengths of  
064 the U.S. Sixth Fleet and Soviet Mediterranean Squadron on 23 occa-  
065 sions over a critical three month period in 1976, shows the dis-  
066 continuity between Fleet size and operating environment to be a  
067 tactical as well as a strategic phenomenon. It was during this  
068 period that Syria intervened overtly in the Lebanese Civil War.  
069 Near the end of the period, at the height of the Syrian interven-  
070 tion and Soviet efforts to see limits placed on it, the Soviets  
071 almost doubled the size of their Mediterranean Squadron -- and  
072 they did double its surface combatant strength.

073           It wasn't until after those augmenting Soviet forces had begun  
074 to withdraw, though, that the strength of the Sixth Fleet varied by  
075 more than one unit. When that occurred, it was only because of the

076

077 \*

078 One lesson learned in the September 1970 Jordanian crisis was the  
079 requirement for a significant helicopter trooplift capability if  
079 the U.S. was to conduct evacuations from other than port cities.



\*Data compiled from Department of Defense news briefings.

FIG. 1: COMPARATIVE STRENGTH OF U.S. AND SOVIET  
NAVAL FORCES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN :  
APRIL-JUNE 1976\*



080 routine replacement of the Fleet's amphibious landing force, which  
081 had been in the Mediterranean its allotted time and was due for re-  
082 lief. By the end of the period, the Sixth Fleet had returned to its  
083 former strength.

084 In all likelihood, the failure to reinforce the Sixth Fleet in  
085 the face of a rapid and significant Soviet buildup was deliberate,  
086 reflecting a conscious U.S. policy of restraint.\* It is not incon-  
087 ceivable, though, that the decision to ignore the Soviet augmentation  
088 was not entirely free, but reflected the temporary unavailability,  
089 for whatever reasons, of some or all of the forces required for such  
090 a reinforcement. It was not the first time, and if current trends  
091 continue it certainly will not be the last time, that such a problem  
092 has presented itself.

093 This insulation of deployments from the operational environ-  
094 ment is visible from two quite different perspectives: "from the  
095 outside looking in" and, not surprisingly, "from the inside looking  
096 out." From the first of these perspectives, employed above and  
097 again later below, it becomes apparent that changes in U.S. naval  
098 deployments to the Middle East are more likely to reflect events  
099 or structural changes occurring outside rather than inside the  
100 region. Viewed from the second of these perspectives it becomes

101 \_\_\_\_\_  
102 \*  
103 This does not mean that such reinforcements do not take place. On  
104 two occasions in the recent past -- in September of 1970, during the  
105 Jordanian Civil War, and in October of 1973, during the Arab-Israeli  
106 War -- one additional carrier task group has been sent to the Medi-  
107 terranean.

108 apparent that, until recently, relatively few such changes occurred,  
109 and that most of those that did were short-lived. But this situation  
110 has now changed: deviations from operational "norms" are both more  
111 frequent and more persistent than they were before 1974. This is  
112 visible in figure 2 below, which details individual aircraft carrier  
113 deployments to the Mediterranean from 1970 through 1975.

115 The information contained in figure 2 also shows that carrier  
116 deployments to the Mediterranean, while undergoing long-term change,  
117 have remained remarkably stable. More often than not there are two  
118 carriers in the Mediterranean; although that is less often the case  
119 now (77.5% of the time in 1975) than it was before (99% of the time  
120 in 1970). However, this may not be a meaningful difference. There  
121 is always one carrier there; and in any event on 283 days in 1975  
122 two were present. It is nevertheless becoming more difficult to  
123 maintain two carriers in the Mediterranean at all times. Two ex-  
124 amples drawn from the data contained in figure 2 illustrate this  
124 trend clearly.

125 In the six years of carrier deployments depicted, there were  
126 24 "turnovers" -- instances where one carrier relieved another carrier  
127 that had been operating with the Sixth Fleet. In the first two years,  
128 five of the ten "turnovers" that occurred were overlapped\* (i.e., the

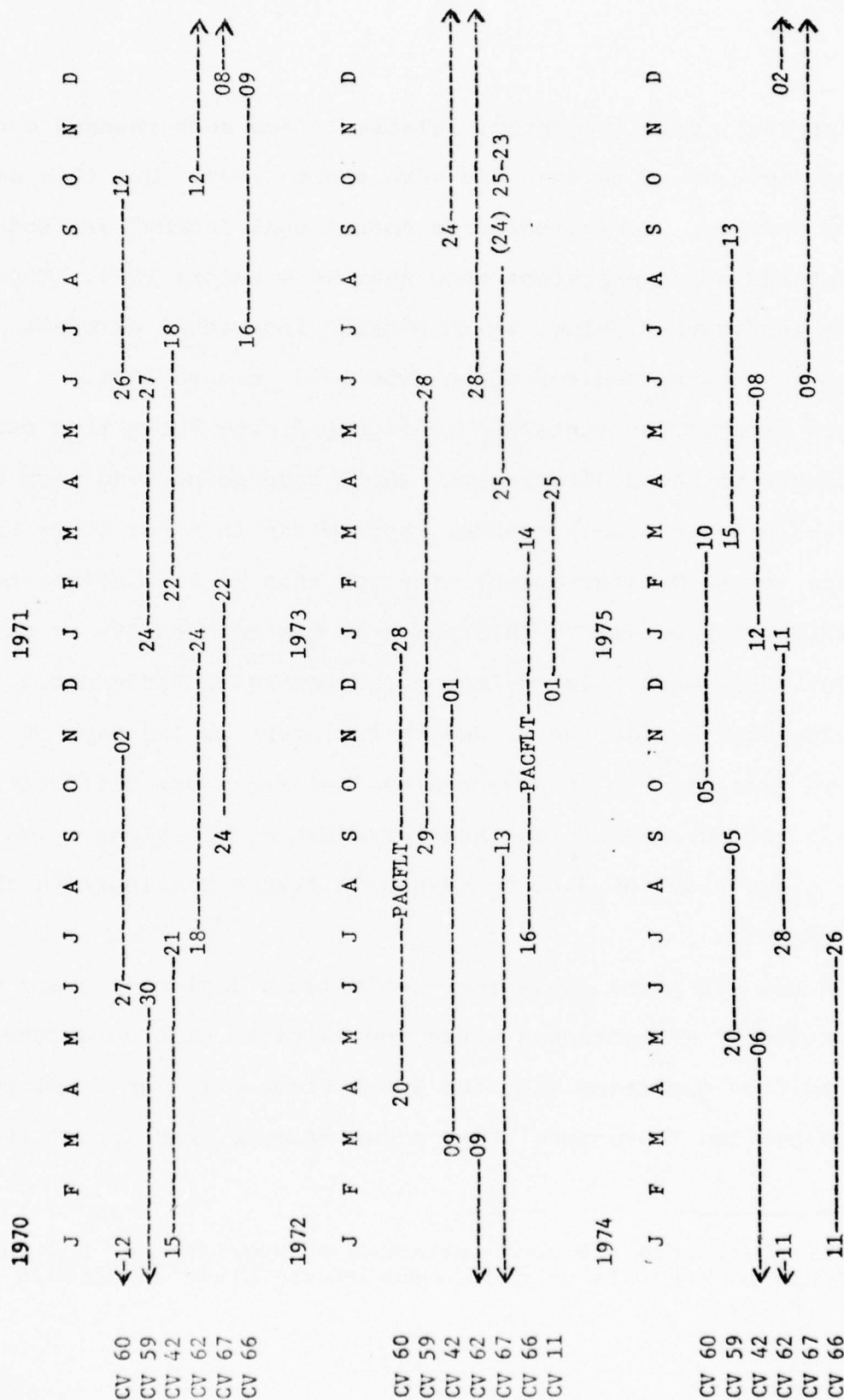
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132

\*

133 Actually there were six such instances of overlapping, but one was  
134 occasioned by a crisis reinforcement of the Fleet and should not be  
135 counted here.

FIGURE 2: FORWARD DEPLOYMENT OF ATLANTIC FLEET AIRCRAFT CARRIERS: 1970-1975\*  
(WITH TWO NOTED EXCEPTIONS, DEPLOYMENTS WERE TO MEDITERRANEAN)



\* Data provided by US Navy

129 incoming and outgoing carriers were in the Mediterranean simulta-  
130 neously for more than a day) and only one turnover was gapped (i.e.,  
136 there was a period of more than a day when neither incoming nor  
137 outgoing carrier was in the Mediterranean). In the second two years,  
138 none of the six turnovers that occurred was overlapped and one was  
139 gapped. In the final two years, there were eight turnovers. None  
140 of these was overlapped, but seven were gapped.

141 Not only have these gaps in the two carrier presence become  
142 more numerous, they have become lengthier. The one gap that occur-  
143 red in 1970 lasted four days. The longest of the four gaps in 1975  
144 was 72 days.

145 Major efforts have been exerted to maintain the two carrier  
146 Mediterranean deployment pattern, however. This is also visible in  
147 figure 2. In early 1972, the demands of the Vietnam War led to the  
148 temporary deployment of two Atlantic Fleet carriers to the Pacific,  
149 reducing to four the number available for Mediterranean deployments.  
150 That reduction brought about two very costly compensatory actions:  
151 sharply increasing -- as a matter of fact doubling -- the length of  
152 the cruises of those carriers that did deploy to the Mediterranean,\*

155  
156 \*  
157 The average Sixth Fleet tour of the last three carriers to deploy to  
158 the Mediterranean before those two were sent to the Pacific lasted  
159 135 days. The average tour of the three regular carriers operated  
160 in the Mediterranean while those two were operating in the Pacific  
160 lasted 274 days.



153 and pressing a far less capable unit\* into service with the Sixth  
154 Fleet as a "gap-filler."

166 The appearance of these gaps is the combined product of fixed  
167 requirements for carrier presence in forward areas and the declining  
168 availability\*\* of carriers to undertake such deployments. The impact  
169 of this situation on deployments, and the efforts made to compensate  
170 for it, can be seen even more readily in figure 3, which shows all  
171 of the deployments of carrier and other task groups to the Indian  
172 Ocean from 1971 through 1975. Inspection of this data shows two  
173 significant features: an immense gap between the first and second  
174 such deployments, and obvious efforts to fill some of the voids  
175 between subsequent carrier deployments.

176 That gap between the first and second deployment was another  
177 reflection of the escalating demands of the Vietnam War in early  
178 1972. When the first group to deploy to the Indian Ocean was de-  
179 parting the area -- Task Force 74, which had been sent there in  
180 December 1971 during the Indo-Pakistani War -- the United States  
181 announced that henceforth such operations would be conducted on

161

161 \*

162 The World War II vintage ESSEX-class carrier Intrepid, which until  
163 shortly before that deployment had been operating as an antisubmarine  
164 warfare unit and could not handle all of the aircraft then operating  
165 in the Sixth Fleet.

187 \*\*

188 Both permanent (the nominal carrier force has been reduced from 15  
189 to 12 units) and temporary (due to budget constraints, operational  
190 pressures, and shipyard limitations, maintenance and repair have  
191 often been deferred in the last few years, and the cumulative im-  
192 pact of those deferrals is beginning to affect the operational  
193 readiness of the carrier force).

DEPLOYMENTS TO THE INDIAN OCEAN: 1970-1975\*

\* Data provided by U.S. Navy

182 a routine basis. Before that routine could be established, however,  
183 the Vietcong/NVA "Easter Offensive" intervened, and every available  
184 carrier went to the Gulf of Tonkin instead (at one time six apparent-  
185 ly were operating there).

194 Carriers were not deployed to the Indian Ocean again\* until  
195 the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War and its accompanying oil embargo.  
196 When they were, it quickly became apparent that those deployments  
197 could not be continuous. It subsequently turned out that they could  
198 not even be periodic. In both instances, cruiser-destroyer task  
199 groups were substituted to fill the gaps in carrier presence and  
200 retain whatever momentum had been established in such deployments.

201 At the beginning of this section it was noted that while sim-  
202 ple portraits of complex phenomena could distort reality, they could  
203 also be revealing. The same in true of summations. That caution  
204 notwithstanding, based only on the data presented in this section --  
205 for which ample corroborating evidence is available elsewhere\*\* --  
206 one can readily infer the fundamental operating precept of the U.S.  
207 Navy: "Keep as much of the force deployed as far forward as much  
208 of the time as possible." Further, if the argument presented in the  
209 preceding section has any validity, the rationale behind this opera-  
210 ting precept is obvious: "lest conflict erupt." And the assumption

215

216

\*  
217 Although Saratoga and America transited through there in 1972 and  
218 again in 1973 on their way to and from the Pacific.

218

219

\*\*  
220 For instance, in the arguments for -- and continuance of -- overseas  
221 homeporting.

211 underlying the entire argument is that, if conflict does erupt, the  
212 Navy must be there when it does -- or, at worst, very shortly there-  
213 after. What it is to do once it is there remains the unanswered  
214 question.

#### 001 REQUIREMENTS

002       It is, of course, no easy task to specify what U.S. require-  
003 ments for naval forces are now or will be in the future, let alone  
004 to say what they should be. As already indicated, the "how much is  
005 enough" question cannot be answered adequately until the "to do what"  
006 question has been answered. The latter is wide open -- and will re-  
007 main so when this paper is completed. The question has no single "cor-  
008 rect" answer. It has become a proper subject of both professional and  
009 partisan debates. And when it is resolved, it will only be through  
010 the political process.

011       In the past, strategic deterrence and theater nuclear war-  
012 fighting on the one hand, and on the other the forceful projection  
013 of conventional military power ashore -- both "worst cases" -- domin-  
014 ated U.S. naval requirements for the Middle East. Most situations  
015 in which it was envisaged that U.S. naval forces would go into ac-  
016 tion were NATO-related. Their primary targets were the Soviet Union  
017 and Soviet forces located outside its borders; and their primary  
018 weapons were nuclear. Other cases -- mostly situations requiring  
019 limits to be imposed on local conflicts or the armed evacuation of  
020 non-combatants from conflict areas, or both -- were clearly outside



021 the established framework of U.S.-Soviet and NATO-Warsaw Pact con-  
022 flict. As a result, they had to be dealt with directly -- rather  
023 than via the Soviets -- and, should the use of force actually be-  
024 come necessary, it was certain to be conventional rather than nuclear  
025 force that was required, and it was taken for granted that it would  
026 be required in a hurry. Thus, nuclear strike and quick-reaction con-  
027 ventional assault forces both become requisites. And since both were  
028 seen as deterrents, the presence of which in the theater could render  
029 their actual use unnecessary, their permanent presence was also seen  
030 as a requisite.

031 For a variety of reasons -- some military, some political;  
032 some domestic, some international\* -- the U.S. naval posture that  
033 evolved to satisfy those requirements and that is characterized in  
034 the section above no longer appears to be appropriate.\*\* And re-  
035 quirements and posture have to fit together reasonably well in order  
036 for forces to be used effectively.

037 Until some consensus develops on the risks the United States  
038 is and is not willing to take in the international arena, and what  
039 fraction of its resources it is willing to devote to a naval hedge

040

041 \*

042 Examples include: revisions of U.S. strategic planning, downgrading  
043 and eventually eliminating the role of carrier air in nuclear strikes  
044 against the Soviet Union; changes in the perceived likelihood of  
045 direct NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict on the Central Front; prospects of  
046 wider and more effective opposition (both from the Soviets and from  
047 regional actors) to U.S. use of force in non-NATO contexts; and de-  
048 creased U.S. interest in using force to control the course and out-  
049 come of events in other than a very restricted set of contexts.

050 \*\*

051 This is entirely aside from the observation advanced in the section  
052 above that it may not be feasible to sustain this posture.

053 against those risks, a satisfactory answer to the "to do what?" ques-  
054 tion will remain out of reach. But there is a fair amount of agree-  
055 ment already on how we should undertake to do whatever we decide to do.

056 Two of the clearest requisites of future operations are that  
057 they be conducted with economy of forces and economy of force. High  
058 unit costs and high unit capabilities will both require and permit  
059 the former. Public sentiment already necessitates the latter, narrow-  
060 ly limiting the instances in which the use of force is considered  
061 justified and the way it is applied.

062 A third requisite is even more starkly visible now. Future  
063 operations must be conducted in a way that minimizes the likelihood  
064 of their producing combat at any level with the Soviet Union, and  
065 limits its ramifications if they do\* -- which, away from the center  
066 stage of the last 30 years, they might.

067 All three of these factors place a premium on the United  
068 States developing the ability to isolate from Soviet influence, and  
069 yet itself retain influence over, the outcomes of international con-  
070 flicts -- without in the process losing control over the nature and  
071 degree of its own involvement. Given those limitations, though,  
072 the United States will only be able to do this if it begins to en-  
073 hance not only the military but the political efficacy of its  
074 forces -- exploiting even more than it has until now their inherent

075

076 \*

077 The same applies, of course, to the Soviets.

078 political influence potential; and achieving by indirect, political  
079 means what it is swiftly becoming too costly to achieve by direct,  
080 military means.

081 INCREASED IMPACT\*

082         The first principle of the political use of military forces  
083 is that they must not be military in name only. In many respects,  
084 in order to be able to achieve an objective indirectly -- i.e.,  
085 through the exercise of influence -- they must be capable of achiev-  
086 ing it directly -- i.e., through the application of force.

087         There is a corollary to this principle. Perceptions inter-  
088 vene. Military forces must not only possess, but be seen to possess,  
089 adequate capability to take direct action. As a result, military  
090 capability does not necessarily produce, and certainly cannot be  
091 equated with, political influence.

092         This coin has two sides, however. An element of a military  
093 force -- one ship of a squadron, one squadron of a fleet, one fleet  
094 of a navy -- is symbolic of that entire force; and to the extent that  
095 the remainder of the entire force can be brought to bear in the  
096 situation at hand, this element acts as a surrogate for that rele-  
097 vant remainder. Consequently, the "adequate capability to take  
098 direct action" just referred to need not be immediately present in  
099 order to achieve its impact; the presence of its representative, if

100

101

102         \*  
103         The following discussion is based on work carried out while the  
104 author was a Professional Staff Member of the Center for Naval Analy-  
105 ses, and incorporates many ideas contributed by former colleagues  
106 there, N. B. Dismukes in particular. It also contains ideas contri-  
107 buted by Barry M. Blechman and other colleagues at the Brookings  
Institution.

108 perceived correctly, can achieve much of its impact. The same holds  
109 true for reinforcements. In many respects it is in the dispatch  
110 rather than the arrival of reinforcements that political impact is  
111 to be found.\* In this sense, political influence does not equal  
112 but may actually exceed military capability.\*\*

113         However, it takes something more than mere capability -- even  
114 perceived capability -- to acquire and exercise influence. The  
115 critical element is the perception that this capability is relevant,  
116 will be used, and is likely to have a significant effect.\*\*\* In  
117 order to be influential, military forces must successfully communi-  
118 cate these messages.\*\*\*\*

119         Military forces communicate in action language: growing, mov-  
120 ing into range, and preparing to fire. Change in the size and

123

124 \*

125 Hence the assertion above that, had a different deployment policy been  
126 in effect, reinforcement of the Sixth Fleet might have provided a  
127 viable alternative to the strategic alert called during the October  
128 War.

129

129 \*\*

130 One implication of this is, of course, that the continuous presence  
131 of a large force in a region is not necessary for the acquisition and  
132 exercise of influence there. While some presence is clearly desirable,  
133 it need not be (and it is argued elsewhere that it should not be) as  
134 large as it could be. A small force that demonstrably can grow much  
135 larger can probably have the same influence as a very large force  
136 that obviously cannot increase.

136

137 \*\*\*

138 It is consequently relative, rather than absolute, capability that  
139 is important.

140

140 \*\*\*\*

141 Or at the minimum not contradict, and at the optimum reinforce, their  
142 communication by other means.



143 composition, disposition, and readiness of a force is therefore the  
144 medium -- and the message.

145         Deployed forces are, in one sence, a general message being  
146 continually broadcast, and in another sense, they are a specific  
147 message waiting to be transmitted. At a minimum, they communicate  
148 that the deploying power has an interest in the area where they are  
149 located. At the maximum, they can not only communicate rather pre-  
150 cisely what that interest is, and what, if anything, that power in-  
151 tends to do about its interest -- but should it become necessary they  
152 can do it.

153         The U.S. Middle East Force can serve as part of an example.  
154 Its mere presence in the northern Indian Ocean represents that gener-  
155 al message: "The United States has an interest in what happens there."  
156 Middle East Force's movements and activities within the area, and  
157 given its quite modest size its reinforcement from time to time by  
158 independent deployment groups, represent those more specific communi-  
159 cations of salience and intent: "The United States is concerned  
160 about issue X, or unconcerned about issue Y; it intends to act in  
161 issue A, but not in issue B."\*

162         However, the nature of the message any such force sends is a  
163 product of two elements: its stance and the situation. The same  
164 action, perceived in different situations, conveys different messages.

165 \_\_\_\_\_  
166 \*  
167 Or, more properly, those reinforcements would provide these more  
168 specific messages if their comings and goings were less constrained  
169 by the internal rhythms of the U.S. Navy and could more closely  
170 reflect the course of events in the Middle East and Indian Ocean.

171        In this case, the U.S. Sixth Fleet provides the rest of the  
172 example. Its concentration and reinforcement in a period of tran-  
173 quility conveys a much different message than does its concentration  
174 and reinforcement in a period of international tension. The strength  
175 and composition of its reinforcements make a major difference; and  
176 it makes a difference where in the Mediterranean it concentrates:  
177 within or clearly outside range of its likely targets. Furthermore,  
178 when it concentrates, the message that is conveyed by obvious pre-  
179 parations for action differs from the message that is conveyed when  
180 such preparations obviously are not being made.

181        In general, the more diffuse the situation -- i.e., the less  
182 the difference between the salience of all the specific issues ac-  
183 tive in the region -- the less is communicated by changes in the  
184 strength, disposition and readiness of the Fleet. The more focused  
185 the situation -- i.e., the more one or another issue dominates the  
186 scene -- the more is communicated by changes in those characteris-  
187 tics of the Fleet. That communication is, nevertheless, specifically  
188 related to those contextual issues.

189        The most important dimension in which changes in the force  
190 effect such communication is the Fleet's ability to have a direct  
191 affect on the outcome of the focal issue. That ability can be  
192 measured in terms of the size and composition of the forces that  
193 are located within range of the issue's focal point, and ready to  
194 unleash their energies.

195           Since most of the local issues in the Middle East focus on  
196 one or another of the littorals, one sine qua non of the capability  
197 of a naval force to influence their outcomes is the capability to  
198 project conventional air and land power ashore -- to take direct  
199 action that resolves issues. On the other hand, since the Soviets  
200 operate in strength in the Mediterranean, and have for some time  
201 now had and used the ability to neutralize Sixth Fleet's projection  
202 power, a second sine qua non for influence is the capability to  
203 establish and maintain air and sea control, wherever and whenever  
204 necessary to enable that projection to take place -- or, at least,  
205 to give the appearance of being able to maintain control. The same  
206 applies in reverse: another sine qua non is the ability to negate  
207 the Soviets' projection power.

208           As noted above, the physical presence of deployed forces  
209 represents a continuous communication of the interest of the deploy-  
210 ing power in the area where those forces are operating. The intensity  
211 of this communication is quite low, however, and the message is nec-  
212 essarily ambiguous, if not vague. Even if the deployed force has  
213 very significant capabilities, the general message broadcast by its  
214 presence is liable to be so diffuse that it becomes indistinguishable  
215 from the background "noise" of regional affairs, and hence the force  
216 fails to exercise any appreciable influence. On the other hand,  
217 regardless of its intrinsic capabilities, its symbolic character

218 guarantees that the specific messages a deployed force communicates  
219 by its actions or inaction as regional issues rise and fall in  
220 salience will not go unnoticed.

221       Consequently, returning to the Middle East, it may be that  
222 the influence that the United States acquires by maintaining a con-  
223 tinuous high-level presence in the region is negligible -- especially  
224 when compared to the influence it would acquire (even if unexercised)  
225 if it deployed significant forces there only when local issues affect-  
226 ing its interests began to develop into conflicts and these to grow  
227 into crises. If this is in fact the case, then on political grounds  
228 and for the purpose of acquiring and exercising political influence,  
229 the continuous presence of major forces in the region is probably not  
230 cost-effective. It may even be counterproductive. Were at least the  
231 strength, disposition and readiness of those forces -- and perhaps  
232 their presence as well -- discontinuous, and if those discontinuities  
233 could be manipulated in accordance with the salience of issues aris-  
234 ing in the region, our forces would be more likely to achieve the  
235 desired influence in those situations it was desired to affect --  
236 and avoid exercising unintended and perhaps undesirable influence  
237 in other situations.

#### 238 CONCLUSIONS

239       Two questions remain to be answered. First, what is in fact  
240 recommended as an alternative to present policy? Second, what are  
241 the strengths and weaknesses of the recommended alternative?



242       The principal recommendation obviously involves scrapping  
243 the operating philosophy that underlies our present naval posture  
244 and that is exemplified by the implied precept identified above:  
245 "keep as much of the force deployed as far forward as much of the  
246 time as possible." That sort of "worst case"-oriented, maximum-  
247 effort forward deployment posture is becoming exceedingly difficult  
248 to sustain. Given the uncertainties of today's world, were it  
249 clearly worth the effort, it should be continued. But it isn't clear  
250 that it is worth it. What is clear, though, is that by operating  
251 in this manner we are denying ourselves the potentially considerable  
252 benefits of manipulating our deployments to increase their political  
252 impact.

253       Consequently, calculated variability should be introduced in-  
254 to our forward naval deployments, with the size and composition of  
255 the visible combat forces operating in forward areas determined not  
256 by the calendar but by what is or is not happening in those areas.  
257 Particular steps to modify our posture in accordance with this  
258 operating philosophy include: allowing the number of carrier task  
259 groups present in the Mediterranean to vary between a minimum of  
260 less than today's ever-present two and a maximum of whatever may be  
261 tomorrow's feasible surge capability (probably four, unless redeploy-  
262 ments from the Pacific are undertaken); making the presence of a  
263 Marine Amphibious Unit in the Mediterranean -- and hence the capa-  
264 bility to project ground forces ashore -- also a variable; and

265 employing the same criteria to control deployments to the Indian  
266 Ocean as well.

267       Two immediate benefits of modifying our posture in this direc-  
268 tion can then be realized. First, it will be possible to reduce the  
269 minor but continuing political costs we pay even in friendly nations  
270 along the littoral simply for maintaining a continuous military pres-  
271 ence in the region. It will also be possible to eliminate one-time  
272 but sometimes major political costs for being present but not taking  
273 sides in those regional conflicts we choose to ignore. Second, and  
274 most important, we can then magnify our political leverage on our  
275 opponents by manipulating our forces. We can lower the threshold  
276 above which the mere deployment of forces, or the reinforcement of  
277 already deployed forces, becomes a politically meaningful action.\*  
278 This will permit the focus of attention to be shifted away from the  
279 smaller and more exposed portion of the force deployed forward and  
280 back toward the larger and more powerful remainder of that force that  
281 has been or soon will be dispatched on its way over there to "settle  
282 the issue." At the moment, our forces are essentially blunt instru-  
283 ments. Changing the way we use them can change them into useful  
284 political tools.

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286 \*

287 A threshold that was too high in October of 1973.

288       The most compelling arguments for preserving as much as possi-  
289 ble of the present pattern of forward deployments are those of de-  
290 layed response and the absence of a deterrent. Unless forces are  
291 present in the region when contingencies arise, it is argued, events  
292 are liable to have run their course before deploying forces can have  
293 any impact on them. Furthermore, had those forces been there all  
294 along, those contingencies might not have arisen, or progressed as  
295 far, etc.

296       In certain respects, neither argument can be answered adequate-  
297 ly. Naval presence can and undoubtedly does have a deterrent effect.  
298 However, many things happen in spite of continuous naval presence;  
299 and many things that might happen in the temporary absence of that  
300 presence, do not.

301       The problem of delayed response persists, but is not as acute  
302 as it was one held to be. Rescue, evacuation and relief operations  
303 retain their time-urgency, but do not as a rule require major forces.  
304 Other actually or potentially time-urgent tasks, such as strategic  
305 retaliatory strikes or interventions to put down attempts to overturn  
306 friendly governments, have faded into the background or disappeared  
307 entirely from the mission. And few events to which deployed forces  
308 might be expected to respond cannot be identified in time to prepare  
309 that response.

310       Flexibility does not guarantee, however, that a policy of  
311 variable deployments can be implemented successfully. At least two

312 and possibly three, additional ingredients are required. The first  
313 is adequate intelligence. The second is timely decision-making.  
314 The third is a bit of luck.

315       Even in the presence of all three, there are going to be  
316 false starts -- when apparently appropriate deployments suddenly be-  
317 come inappropriate, and must be recalled. There are also going to  
318 be both outright losses and missed opportunities for gain -- when it  
319 becomes clear later on that deployments that were not initiated should  
320 have been. On balance, however, retaining the option to have sub-  
321 stantial forces present in and around the Middle East where and when  
322 they are needed and wanted there, and to have them depart when they  
323 are not needed -- and most likely not wanted -- there, must be viewed  
324 as an advantage we should not continue to disregard.



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